

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for automatically creating a playlist, comprising:
 - receiving a reference playlist defining a plurality of attributes for each of one or more program segments, the attributes comprising an on-air time, a start-of message, and a duration for each program segment;
 - comparing at least one on-air time in the reference playlist to a specified reference time;
 - identifying, based on the comparison, at least one program segment in the reference playlist that is active at the specified reference time; and
- 10 adjusting, based on the at least one identified active program segment, one or more attributes for one or more program segments in the reference playlist to create a new playlist.
2. The invention of claim 1, wherein:
 - the reference playlist corresponds to a playlist currently being executed by a first subsystem that sources an on-air feed; and
 - 15 the specified reference time is based on the current time of day.
3. The invention of claim 2, further comprising executing the new playlist on a second subsystem that provides failure protection for the first subsystem.
- 20 4. The invention of claim 2, wherein the first subsystem is a multicast subsystem.
5. The invention of claim 4, wherein the multicast subsystem is an internet-based streaming subsystem.
- 25 6. The invention of claim 1, wherein:
 - the reference playlist corresponds to a playlist currently being executed by a first subsystem that sources a first on-air feed that is intended for viewing in at least a first time zone, and

the specified reference time is based on the current time of day in a second time zone that is different than the first time zone.

7. The invention of claim 6, further comprising executing the new playlist on a second subsystem that sources a second on-air feed that is intended for viewing in at least the second time zone.

8. The invention of claim 6, further comprising:
executing the reference playlist on a second subsystem that sources an intermediate feed
10 that is substantially synchronous with the first on-air feed that is sourced by the first subsystem; and

delaying the intermediate feed using a delay unit to produce a second on-air feed that is intended for viewing in at least the second time zone, such that the difference between the start of a given program segment in the first on-air feed and the start of the given program
15 segment in the second on-air feed is equal to the time of day difference between the first and second time zones, wherein, upon detecting a failure in the delay unit:

the delay unit is bypassed such that the intermediate feed becomes the second on-air feed; and

the new playlist is loaded into and executed by the second subsystem.

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9. The invention of claim 1, further comprising selecting the one or more program segments in the reference playlist to adjust, taking into account a queuing delay associated with a source of each selected program segment.

25 10. The invention of claim 9, wherein at least one active program segment is not selected to be adjusted based on the queuing delay of the source associated with the active program segment.

30 11. The invention of claim 1, wherein the received reference playlist is selected from a plurality of playlists with the assistance of a rule-based playlist validator.

12. The invention of claim 11, wherein at least one of the playlists in the plurality of playlists is from a playlist archive.

5 13. The invention of claim 1; comprising:

a. initializing a first variable based on the reference time plus a processing time;

b. initializing a second variable to the value of the first variable;

c. determining a current program segment from the reference playlist by comparing the value of the second variable with timeslots for program segments in the reference

10 playlist;

d. determining media type and corresponding queuing delay for the source of the current program segment;

e. updating the value of the second variable to be equal to the value of first variable plus the queuing delay, and

15 f. checking to see if the updated value of the second variable is within the timeslot for the current program segment, and, if it is not, repeating steps (c)–(e) until the updated value of the second variable is within the timeslot for the current program segment.

14. The invention of claim 13, wherein the adjusting includes:

20 determining a value for a third variable by subtracting the on-air time of the current program segment from the value of the second parameter;

calculating a new start-of message attribute for the current program segment by adding the start-of message of the current program segment to the value of the third parameter;

25 calculating a new duration attribute for the current program segment by subtracting the value of the third parameter from the duration of the current program segment, and

setting a new start-of time for the current program segment equal to the value of the second variable.

15. The invention of claim 13, wherein:
the first variable corresponds to a variable CurrentTime;
the second variable corresponds to a variable NewOnAirTime, and
the third variable corresponds to a variable TimePast.

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16. The invention of claim 1, wherein two or more program segments are from different sources.

17. The invention of claim 1, wherein at least one of the one or more program segments
10 is sourced by a video server.

18. An automated playlist chaser adapted to:
receive a reference playlist defining a plurality of attributes for each of one or more
program segments, the attributes comprising an on-air time, a start-of message, and a
15 duration for each program segment;
compare at least one on-air time in the reference playlist to a specified reference time;
identify, based on the comparison, at least one program segment in the reference playlist
that is active at the specified reference time; and
adjust, based on the at least one identified active program segment, one or more attributes
20 for one or more program segments in the reference playlist to create a new playlist.

19. The invention of claim 18, further comprising executing the new playlist on a second
subsystem that provides failure protection for the first subsystem.

25 20. The invention of claim 18, further comprising selecting the one or more program
segments in the reference playlist to adjust taking into account a queuing delay associated
with a source of each selected program segment.

21. The invention of claim 18, wherein:

the reference playlist corresponds to a playlist currently being executed by a first subsystem that sources a first on-air feed that is intended for viewing in at least a first time zone, and

5 the specified reference time is based on the current time of day in a second time zone that is different than the first time zone.

22. The invention of claim 18, wherein two or more program segments are from different sources.

10 23. A content sourcing facility comprising:

at least first and second content sourcing subsystems, each adapted to generate a subsystem stream of content; and

an automated playlist chaser adapted to:

receive a reference playlist defining a plurality of attributes for each of one or more 15 program segments, the attributes comprising an on-air time, a start-of message, and a duration for each program segment;

compare at least one on-air time in the reference playlist to a specified reference time; identify, based on the comparison, at least one program segment in the reference playlist that is active at the specified reference time; and

20 adjust, based on the at least one identified active program segment, one or more attributes for one or more program segments in the reference playlist to create a new playlist, wherein at least one of the content sourcing subsystems generates its subsystem stream of content based on the new playlist.

25 24. The invention of claim 23, further comprising executing the new playlist on a second subsystem that provides failure protection for the first subsystem.

25. The invention of claim 23, further comprising selecting the one or more program 30 segments in the reference playlist to adjust taking into account a queuing delay associated with a source of each selected program segment.

26. The invention of claim 23, wherein:

the reference playlist corresponds to a playlist currently being executed by a first subsystem that sources a first on-air feed that is intended for viewing in at least a first time zone, and

5 the specified reference time is based on the current time of day in a second time zone that is different than the first time zone.

27. The invention of claim 23, wherein two or more program segments are from

10 different sources.

28. The invention of claim 23, wherein at least one content sourcing subsystem includes:

an automation server adapted to execute a playlist;

a plurality of content sources; and

15 a content router coupled to the outputs of the content sources, wherein:

the automation server is adapted to communicate information derived from the playlist to one or more of the content sources in the plurality of content sources; and

the content router is adapted to select an output of one of the plurality of content sources and output a routed output upon which the subsystem stream of content is based.

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29. The invention of claim 23, further comprising a network management station adapted to monitor the status of the subsystems and, in the event of a failure of a subsystem, report this failure to the automated playlist chaser.

25 30. A server comprising at least one processing unit adapted to execute:

operating software for managing communication and file operations; and

at least a portion of an automated playlist chaser application, wherein the automated playlist chaser application is adapted to:

receive a reference playlist defining a plurality of attributes for each of one or more program segments, the attributes comprising an on-air time, a start-of message, and a duration for each program segment;

5 compare at least one on-air time in the reference playlist to a specified reference time;

identify, based on the comparison, at least one program segment in the reference playlist that is active at the specified reference time; and

adjust, based on the at least one identified active program segment, one or more attributes for one or more program segments in the reference playlist to create a new playlist.